

Border Issues

ONE
PEOPLE
ONE
COMMUNITY



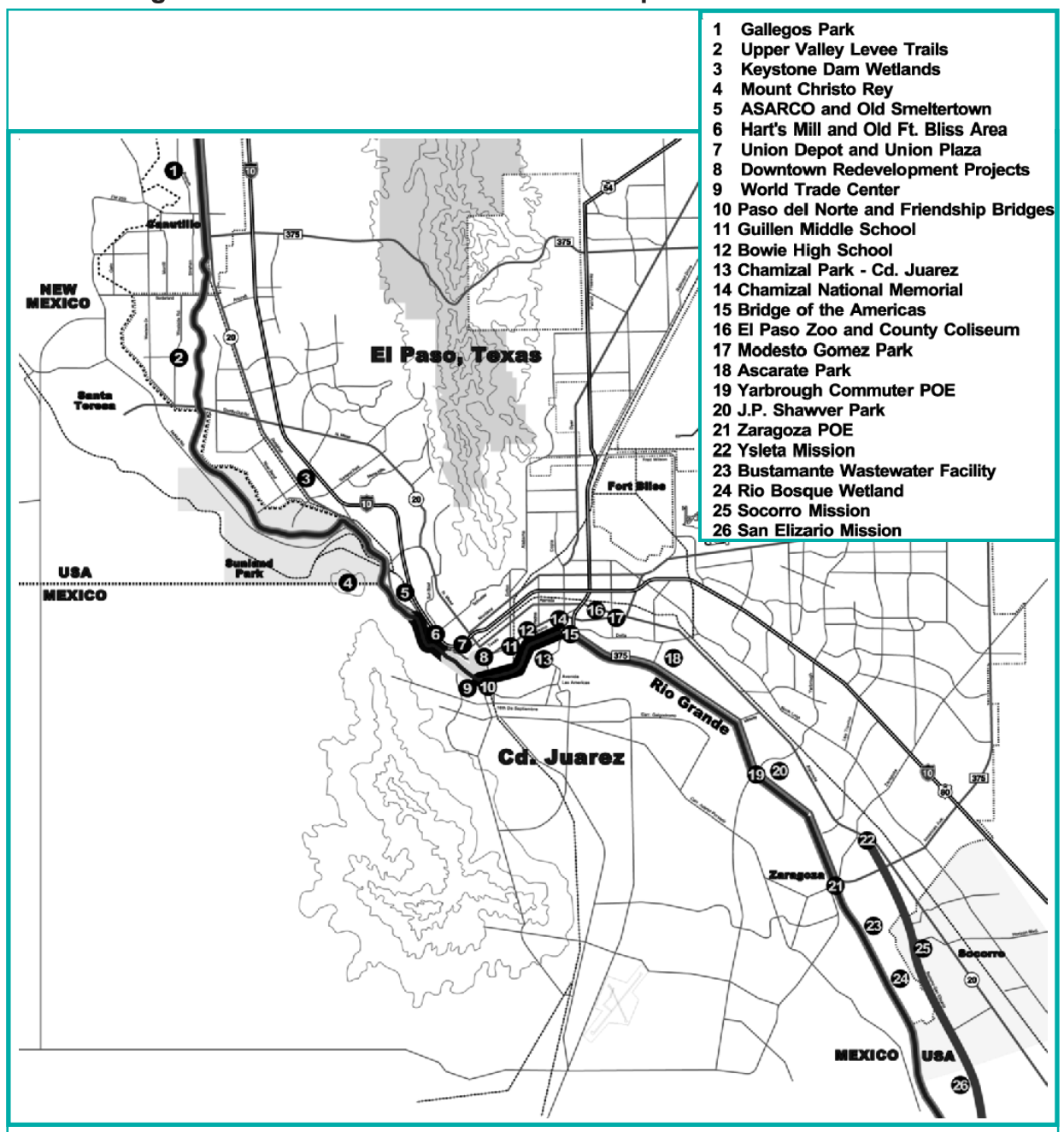
La Frontera

El Paso is the largest city in the United States situated directly on an international border. Communities in the Paso del Norte metroplex include municipalities in three states and two countries as detailed in the Southwest Chapter. To some, the border is a physical as well as psychological barrier to be maintained in order to preserve national sovereignty. However, border communities have long known that a borderline is much less concrete. Locally, the City of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez act as one on many levels, the physical border itself nothing more than a temporary delay in the daily lives of its residents. Immigrants play a major role in this process and serve to further tie the two communities together. It is imperative that the region be represented in all national discussions on border-related issues.

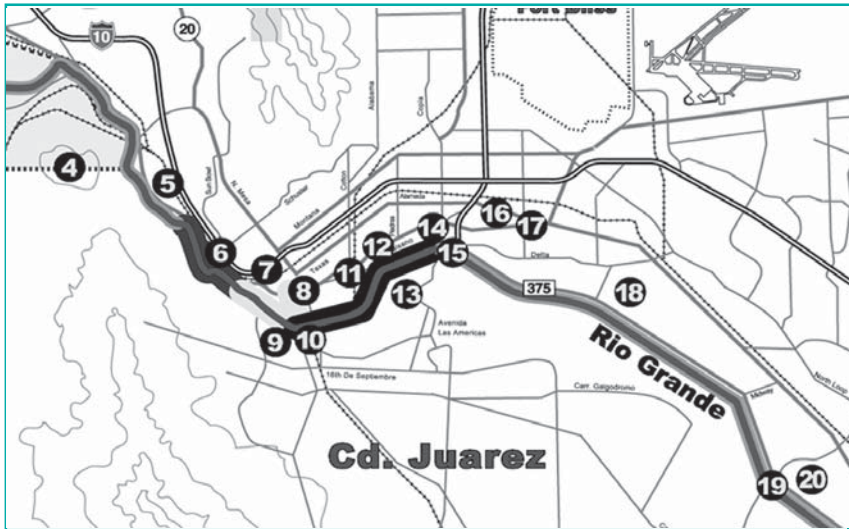
Primary Goal

Because of our location on the border, the City of El Paso has the unlimited potential to be a competitive international community that draws trade and tourism to our cultural, geographic and environmental attractions. By cooperating with our neighbors to promote the region, El Paso can become a world-class urban area uniquely capitalizing on its location as the international gateway to Mexico.

American Heritage River and other Border Area Concepts



Life on the border takes into account varied levels of interaction throughout the region. For example, El Paso's proximity to Mexico, as well as an ongoing tradition of immigration, accounts for a large Hispanic presence in the City. The impact of immigration on a community and its resources is an issue that provokes strong feelings along the international border as well as in the capitals of both countries. While immigration policy is a national prerogative, the effects of that policy are realized along the border.

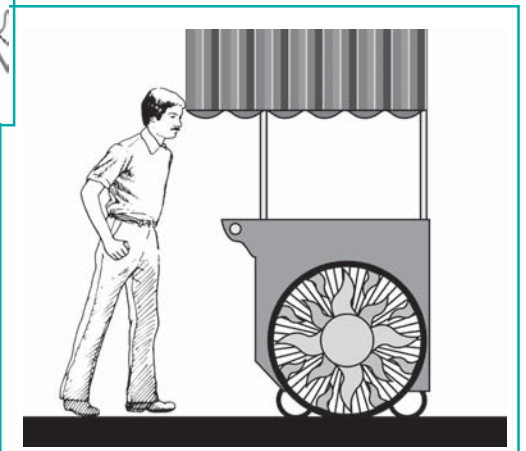


Above: Close up of Border Area -- El Paso/Juarez Linkages.

Border Area Concepts

The Border Area Concepts are amenities concentrated in the area immediately adjacent to the river border as illustrated in this section of *The Plan*. Concepts include potential projects to be located in the immediate border area, as well as those linkages within and throughout the border linking the entire Paso del Norte region.

Left: Downtown food vendor cart illustration.



Above: View of Downtown from the Union Plaza District.

Right: Downtown construction.



The American Heritage River proposal, and all its related projects, for example, are part of this conceptual illustration. The purpose of these proposed projects is to increase the border area attractiveness locally and internationally.

Cultural Influence

International border crossings are frequent and are utilized for employment, business, education, entertainment, shopping and cultural resources.

GOAL: **ESTABLISH AND PROMOTE EL PASO/JUAREZ AS A REGIONAL CULTURAL CENTER TO ENHANCE THE CULTURAL VITALITY AND IMAGE OF THE AREA.**

Projects focusing on the linkages between the two downtown areas are proposed as part of the Border Area Concept. Enhancement projects need to improve linkages between the two cities through various themes.



Above: Ysleta Historic District.

POLICY: **Promote a positive image for the area, including historical integration of both El Paso and Juarez, in promotional packages reaching national or global audiences.**

ACTION: **Require architectural styles that are culturally representative of the region in designated areas.**

Streetscape improvements in the downtown area—Paseo de las Luces, Old San Francisco District, Magoffin District, and the Union Plaza District—are good examples of how architectural themes, in these instances with historic significance, are interwoven into the urban fabric.

POLICY: **Support sponsorship of cultural and civic activities in El Paso/Juarez that promote the City's heritage and image.**

ACTION: **Create a liaison/coordinating entity to serve as a central network to serve, promote and share resources for all cultural events in the region.**

ACTION: **Implement promotional packages reaching national and global audiences.**

An enhanced image of Juarez/El Paso needs to be widely promoted. It is paramount that the sister cities increase cooperation to reach this goal. Additionally, marketing and promotional materials for residents and visitors—of recreational, historical or cultural events—add to a community's quality of life.



Above: Artist's rendering of Union Plaza Streetscape Improvements.

POLICY: Promote the location of new cultural and civic events in the Paso del Norte region.

ACTION: Create distinct cultural districts to house historical and cultural museums, events, and projects in locations such as downtown.

A plan to increase El Paso's share of the tourist business must include cooperation between private organizations and related entities in governmental organizations. This section is expanded in the **Economic Development Chapter**.

Governmental and Regional Cooperation

It is in El Paso's interest to seek solutions to international issues in conjunction with our neighbors. Though separated by the international border, we share the same valley, the same water, the same air and the same history.

GOAL: CONTINUE PLANNING, DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND JOINT INITIATIVES WITHIN THE PASO DEL NORTE REGION AMONG MUNICIPAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES.

A number of governmental bodies at the local, state and national levels on both sides of the border complicate the planning process in the region. Taking the mandates of these agencies into consideration when proposing projects or programs is one way of improving services.

POLICY: Pursue federal, state and local policies that improve the vitality of border communities.

ACTION: Create bi-national regional entities to formulate policies that address local, state and federal concerns.

State, federal and even international entities control key factors that shape the City leaving the policies which most affects El Paso's urban form in the hands of entities which lie beyond local control. Thus it is imperative that local impacts of these policies are considered at all governmental levels.

POLICY: Pursue federal and state policies that adequately provide funding for the requirements imposed upon the City by federal and state mandates.

ACTION: Publish a joint, regional business and governmental annual report outlining positive events as well as areas for improvement as they relate to a regional planning strategy.

Several federal agencies have jurisdiction over different aspects of international crossings at the ports-of-entry. Projects to address jointly include those dealing with trade and economic issues, environmental concerns, and port-of-entry projects.

Regional Water Resources

Rapid growth benefiting all the communities within the region has occurred in the last three decades. The net effect of this growth has never been comprehensively appraised. In the next several decades it can be expected that the effect of this growth will cause a reallocation of water resources and a change in the end users from predominately agricultural to a mix of agricultural, municipal and industrial users. While renewable sources can provide social stability, disruption will occur if a coordinated strategy is not adopted and implemented. To secure community and economic health, bi-national and bi-state cooperation is a necessary ingredient in solving this regional concern.

GOAL: CONTINUE BUILDING MOMENTUM TOWARD BROAD BASED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS ON A REGIONAL WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, THAT INCLUDES ALL NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL PARTICIPANTS, THAT CAN ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE USE OF WATER RESOURCES.

POLICY: Continue to develop concrete proposals, for water system components such as water and waste water treatment plants, to resolve issues facing Mexican, Texan, and New Mexican entities. Continue work on agreements to adjust the water management regime to accommodate the necessary changes in usage and flow.

ACTION: Utilizing regional planning, establish a cooperative agreement to have year round surface water flows supplied to the City of El Paso and other potential year round users.

The New Mexico-Texas Water Commission is actively developing a cooperative treatment and conveyance system of sustainable surface water for municipal and industrial use. This amicable relationship is an example of the type of process that needs to be expanded to mutually solve water problems within the region. It will literally determine the extent of development and health of the community. Handling the issue in a just, fair and safe manner, where disputes are resolved sooner rather than later, is the most cost effective and environmentally beneficial way to advance the health of the region. This process will require the involvement of the Federal governments of Mexico and the United States, the States of Texas, Chihuahua, and New Mexico, and all the cities within the region as well as the various other agencies, districts and effected private entities.

International Trade

The driving forces behind the economy of the region are the business and cultural ties across the border.

GOAL: ESTABLISH THE REGION AS A COMPETITIVE INTERNATIONAL GATEWAY CENTER FOR TRADE.

With increased trade liberalization in the Americas, the potential for increased foreign investment remains to be realized. Mexico's solid position in opening world markets and its geographic advantage as a hemisphere-wide strategic hub can aid El Paso's economy.

POLICY: Provide a user-friendly environment to attract, promote and support international businesses and services.

ACTION: Offer flexible incentives to potential businesses considering locating in the area that offer a streamlined approval process.

ACTION: Implement programs to promote international trade throughout the region.

El Paso's unique relationship with Juarez has spurred the growth of trade and manufacturing. While recent economic expansion has brought many benefits, negative impacts have been felt as well. In addition to congestion at the international ports-of-entry, pollution increases and semi-trailer traffic has taken its toll on the local infrastructure network. The region cannot resist expansion and change; however, this expansion cannot occur at the expense of its residents' quality of life.

POLICY: Encourage the development of intermodal transportation infrastructure that supports the development of the region for trade.

ACTION: Remove physical and procedural barriers at international ports-of-entry in order to enhance international trade.

More and better managed port facilities are needed to accommodate the expected growth that will enhance the business environment on the border. These facilities are needed to continue to capitalize on El Paso's border location. To draw from the positive aspects of increased trade liberalization and El Paso's location on the border, continued coordination on transportation issues is needed.

POLICY: Support organizations that promote international trade.

ACTION: Provide ongoing support for the continued growth of bi-national World Trade Center facilities.

Public and private efforts to attract major cultural, recreational and economic development resources need to be aggressively pursued as well.

NAFTA

While the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has brought many opportunities to the area, strain associated with economic expansion and trade adjustment are apparent as well. El Paso has been adversely affected in terms of displaced workers because of increasing economic globalization formalized in agreements like NAFTA. The City in the mid-nineties has had to address the needs of limited-skilled workers displaced by trade adjustment in ways it had not considered before. Many of these workers did not gain additional skills which could make them quickly employable by another sector as they have spent most of their working life in these manufacturing industries. The long-term effects of increased trade liberalization and its exaction on El Paso—its people, services, and economy—need to be taken into account so that appropriate planning—physical and social—is undertaken to avoid severe and sudden negative impacts on the City.

North American Free Trade Agreement: Canada, United States, Mexico.



POLICY: Pursue fulfillment and enhancement of NAFTA provisions such as workforce training and infrastructure initiatives.

Workforce training to take advantage of employment opportunities needs to be addressed as explained in the **Economic Development Chapter**. Additionally, planning efforts must be geared to handle increased demand on the region's transportation infrastructure and increased capacity caused by NAFTA-related traffic.

Economic Impact

El Paso's border location is one of its main economic attractions. An increase in *maquiladora* jobs, with nearly half of all Mexican *maquiladoras* located in Ciudad Juarez, has spurred the Juarez and El Paso economies. The Industrial Markets map in the **Map Atlas of The Plan** shows these strong regional relationships.

GOAL: LEVERAGE EL PASO'S BI-NATIONAL BORDER LOCATION AND ASSETS TO DRAW MORE BUSINESSES TO THE AREA AND ENHANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Large warehousing and manufacturing clusters at various El Paso locations are a result of increased trade liberalization. Since the implementation of NAFTA, the transport of components south and the return of assembled products north has increased.

POLICY: Develop and implement a regional marketing plan, including innovative incentives, to attract increased investment that focus on marketing El Paso's strategic international location and other assets.

POLICY: Promote El Paso as a supplier and support services center for the maquiladora industry in Mexico.

Below: *Industrial parks in the region.*



ACTION: Continue to attract manufacturing industries to the area through the use of incentives.

The region's comparative advantage as a manufacturing and transportation corridor should be enhanced to attract further industrial development. Efforts to strengthen the manufacturing sector are important.

Tourism

As the gateway to Mexico, El Paso needs to continue to promote its location nationally and internationally. This section is expanded in the **Economic Development Chapter**.

GOAL: **ESTABLISH THE PASO DEL NORTE REGION AS AN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM GATEWAY AND DESTINATION.**

POLICY: **Promote the Paso del Norte region as a tourist destination.**



Above: Santa Fe Street port-of-entry Downtown.

El Paso's location on the international border enhances the City's attractiveness as a tourism destination. The designation of the Rio Grande as an American Heritage River, for example, recognizes the river's place in American history, a draw for historic tourism. This designation can also help to foster projects along the river that can serve a dual purpose—enhancement and beautification of the river area for tourism and for local recreational uses.

ACTION: **Create a regional strategic tourism plan to attract visitors to the area with a theme that captures the region's culture, climate, heritage and diversity.**

ACTION: **Create a regional entity to promote and pursue funding and investment for tourism ventures while monitoring tax revenue generated by these.**

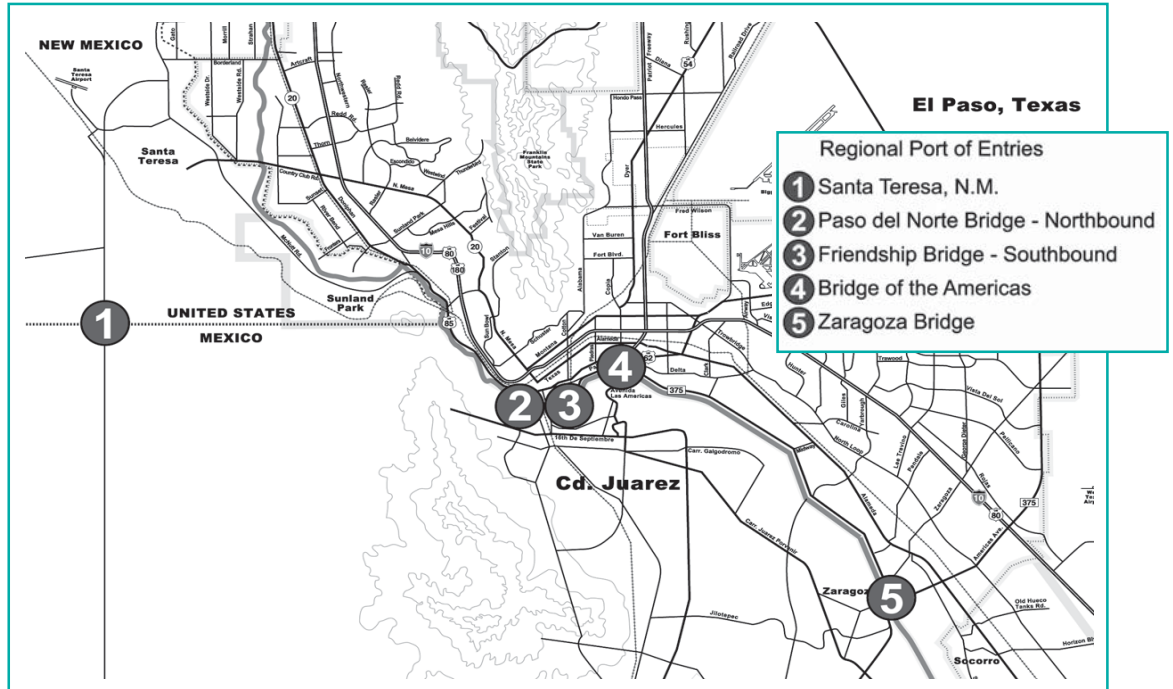
ACTION: **Promote annual regional cultural festivals celebrating the area's history.**

ACTION: **Establish information centers throughout the City to provide information about El Paso's history and cultural events.**

ACTION: **Attract major international amenities to the area.**

Ciudad Juarez is a major regional tourist draw for El Paso; both cities benefit from an enhanced Juarez image. Likewise, El Paso's international ports-of-entry and shopping opportunities draw a large number of Mexicans from Juarez and outlying regions. Therefore, a regional strategic tourism plan—to include promotion of local festivals, setting up tourist information centers at key locations, and promoting and recruiting additional entertainment facilities and events to the area—can only benefit the entire region.

Regional Ports-of-Entry



Ports-of-Entry

The ports-of-entry (POE) in El Paso are an important element of the City's form, its economy, and its character. The POE form part of the infrastructure that foster linkages between the United States and Mexico.

GOAL: IMPROVE PORTS-OF-ENTRY EFFICIENCY AND APPEARANCE TO FOSTER A MORE WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT BY PROVIDING SUFFICIENT PORTS-OF-ENTRY AND FACILITIES AS NEEDED AND REQUIRED.

The ports-of-entry give the City its unique character as a border community. El Paso shares several vehicular and pedestrian POE with Mexico as illustrated.

POLICY: Create international connections that enhance linkages and do not create barriers.

ACTION: Establish a managing port authority to facilitate the movement of goods and people, develop additional international border crossings, and coordinate port activities at the regional level.

ACTION: Provide a friendly and thematic atmosphere for ports-of-entry users.

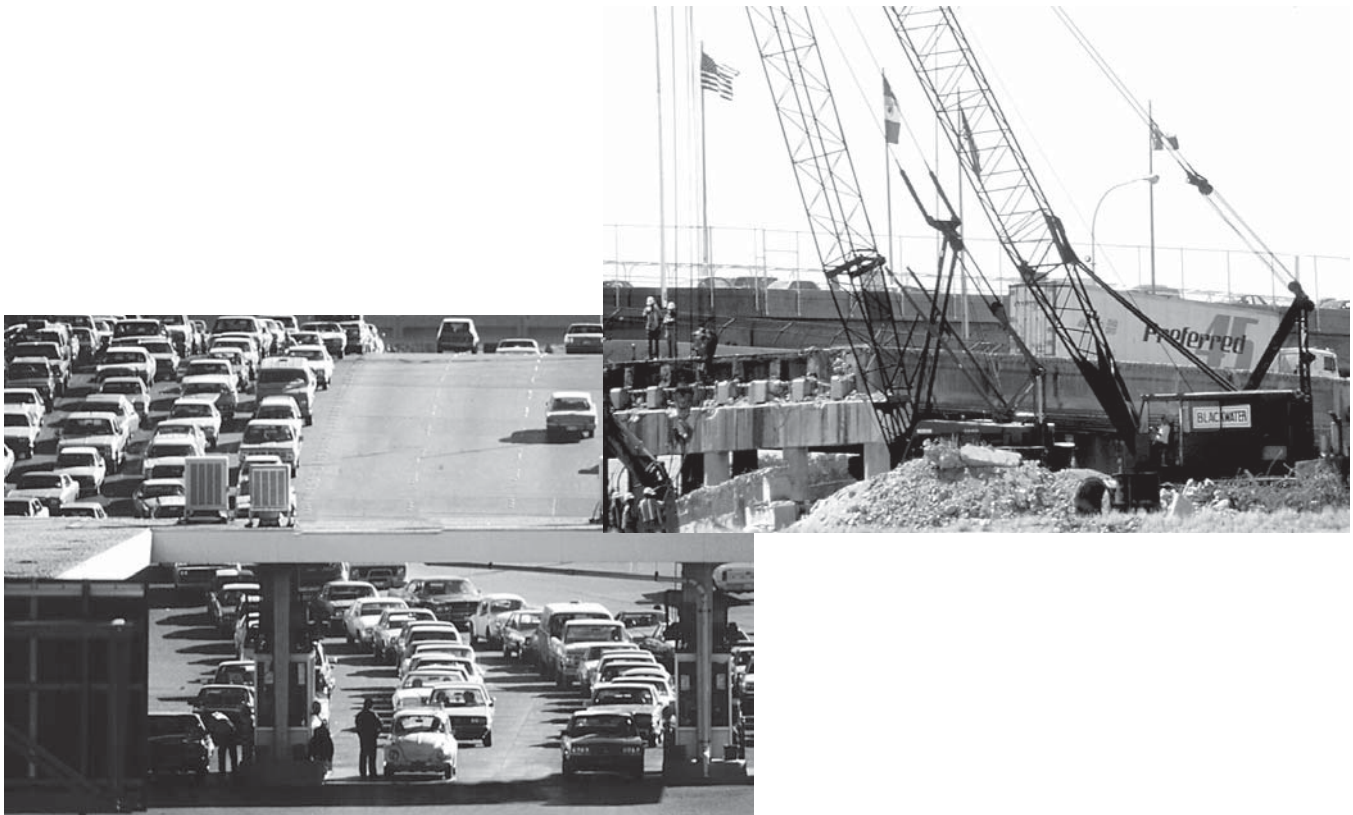
ACTION: Improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation near and around the ports-of-entry with particular attention to enhancing pedestrian walkways.

ACTION: Establish information centers at each port-of-entry.

ACTION: **Separate commercial versus non-commercial traffic at the ports-of-entry.**

ACTION: **Implement high-technology innovations to reduce crossing times.**

Improving port-of-entry appearance and efficiency is one way of enhancing the border area. Improving the efficiency of the existing ports is the top priority for the border area. Methods to do this include improving ports-of-entry management by creating a regional entity to oversee operations. Additional improvements include providing adequate staff at key times, separating non-commercial from commercial traffic, and improving circulation systems in and around the ports. Additionally, new technologies can further streamline the border crossing process. Excessive delays in crossing times—resulting in long car lines—are unsightly and inconvenient. Therefore, coordination with port managing entities is necessary. The ports' appearance can be improved to make the experience of crossing the international border a more welcoming experience. Finally, facilities in and around the ports-of-entry can be improved.



Above: Cordova bridge and port expansion projects.

POLICY: **Pursue targeted funding for the maintenance and improvement of the ports-of-entry.**

ACTION: **Construct adequate and convenient facilities for vehicular parking and deliveries in and around the ports of entry.**

ACTION: Construct high occupancy vehicle (HOV) and dedicated commuter lanes (DCL) to reduce the number of single occupancy vehicle (SOV) crossings at the ports-of-entry.

ACTION: Increase the number of inspectors at the ports-of-entry to reduce crossing time at the international crossings.

As additional POE are required to meet the City's growing needs, adequate planning for this infrastructure is imperative. Within the next twenty years, refurbishing parts and even the entirety of existing facilities will also be necessary. Refurbishing port facility bridges offers redevelopment opportunities in the areas surrounding the ports.

Transportation

As a border community, El Paso's linkages between the United States and Mexico are important not only at the local level, but at an international level.

GOAL: DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED LONG-RANGE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM THAT ENHANCES INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES.



Above: Bridge of the Americas (BOTA) port-of-entry traffic.

POLICY: Improve international transit to reduce congestion and improve circulation by actions such as enhancing approaches to international crossings.

ACTION: Construct an international intermodal transportation facility to serve regional needs.

ACTION: Explore international mass transit alternatives (See Map Atlas).

An international long range metropolitan transportation plan would be a logical venue for El Paso/Juarez to begin addressing transportation issues jointly as detailed in the **Transportation Chapter**. A cooperative effort at the local level is vital to creating a comprehensive transportation network for the entire metro area. Additionally, international mass transit is another area requiring cross-border cooperation. When the potential ridership and destinations are expanded to include both the U.S. and Mexican systems, a metro wide, international light rail network becomes more feasible.

Education

Any vision for the future must include education as a priority. Quality education serves to support economic development, creates informed consumers, fosters citizen participation at all levels of community life, leads to greater affluence and prosperity and contributes to a greater quality of life for the whole community.

GOAL: **RAISE EDUCATIONAL LEVELS IN THE REGION IN ORDER TO COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL ARENA.**

POLICY: **Encourage fluency in English and Spanish at all grade levels.**

ACTION: **Establish El Paso/Juarez student exchange programs at the college and high school levels.**

ACTION: **Promote bilingualism as a workforce skill by encouraging fluency in English and Spanish at all grade levels.**



Above: El Paso Independent School District school in Northeast El Paso.

Special focus on bi-national cooperation is needed to have a regionally attractive workforce. For example, encouraging fluency in English and Spanish can be a workforce skill the City promotes and markets.

POLICY: **Integrate educational efforts to facilitate workforce development and training.**

ACTION: **Work with local school districts and higher education institutions to better prepare youth for border economic opportunities.**

As competition for space in the global marketplace increases, education will be the key for an attractive workforce; a high level of educational attainment for the greater regional benefit is needed. Additionally, the percentage of students graduating from high school needs to improve; providing positive re-enforcement and incentives to reduce drop out rates is important. Finally, training and/or re-training low-skilled displaced workers is important for the local economy as discussed in the **Economic Development Chapter**.

Environmental Concerns

As El Paso and surrounding municipalities grow, stress on the region's natural resources will continue to increase. The most vivid example of this is the effect of population growth on the region's water supply and air quality. The issues are discussed in greater detail in the **Environmental Chapter**. El Paso must address these issues regionally, especially across the international border.

GOAL: **IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE ALONG THE BORDER REGION BY IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES.**

POLICY: **Enhance joint environmental improvement initiatives with Mexico.**

ACTION: **Pursue NAFTA related initiatives to protect the border environment.**

Enforcing environmental standards for both cities is necessary to mitigate environmental deterioration. It is also important to note Juarez's role in contributing to the region's pollution problems. Key transportation related strategies that address vehicle usage and transit options can be found in the **Transportation Chapter**.

ACTION: **Reduce delays at the ports-of-entry to reduce emissions.**

POLICY: **Conserve and secure water resources for the region's future.**

As water use increases with demand, the delicate Hueco Bolson—a traditionally dependable water source serving both Juarez and El Paso—will be diminished as a usable water resource. Besides water resource issues, the area's air quality is another environmental concern that requires international cooperation. Pollution can only be mitigated by cooperation between the federal, state and municipal governments of both countries.



Above: Pollution at the border.

Border Health

Health conditions on the Texas-Mexico border are among the worst in the U.S. In El Paso, for example, portions of the City are federally designated “medically underserved areas.”

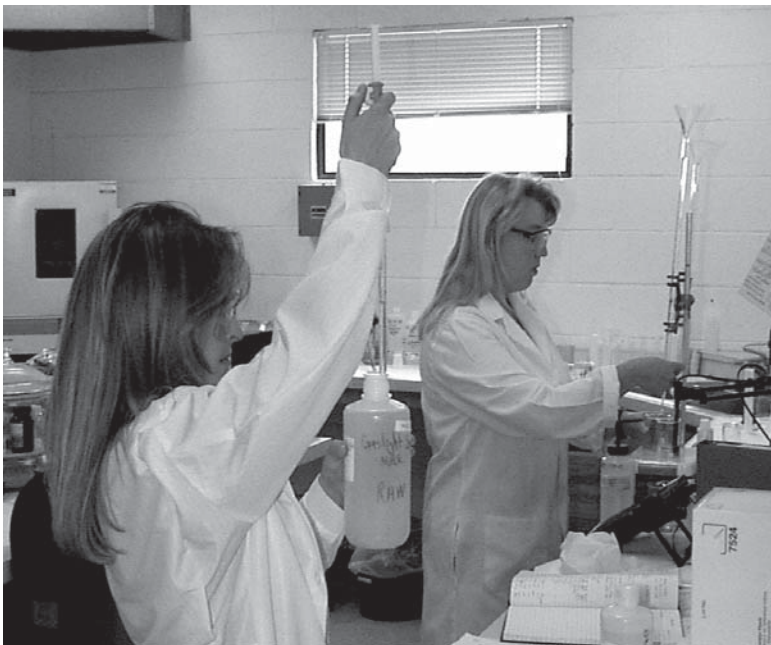
GOAL: **ASSURE THAT THERE ARE SUFFICIENT PREVENTIVE AND HEALTH CARE RESOURCES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER.**

High poverty rates contribute to the overall poor health of border residents with many uninsured residents and a public health system that must cope with limited resources. The City’s border location also makes residents susceptible to diseases that know no borders. Border communities’ disease prevention programs must collaborate with Mexico in attacking shared problems and root causes.

POLICY: **Assure cooperation among regional healthcare organizations.**

To improve health care throughout the region, healthcare organizations serving the area must cooperate to address common problems. These range from high levels of indigent care, the large number of uninsured people in the area, to facilities providing health services and funding for specific border health concerns.

Below: *Communicable disease research.*



ACTION: **Promote immunization of children on both sides of the border.**

ACTION: **Continue and enhance initiatives to reduce communicable diseases on both sides of the border.**

Preventive measures, such as immunization of children, are key health programs that can improve the overall community health. More preventive programs would alleviate a number of healthcare problems in the area. Because of the uniqueness of the border region’s health issues, ensuring adequate resources is critical for the improved health and quality of life of the region.